



FACT SHEET

Disease Prevention

for Parents and Childcare Providers

Pests

Most children like animals and benefit from interacting with them. However, there are a few creatures that all of us prefer to avoid, like mice, mosquitoes, poisonous spiders, and flies. These may carry disease, bite, or be a nuisance. Children may not be aware of the danger of bites and disease from pests.

Poisonous spiders

Most spiders are beneficial. There are only two poisonous spiders found in Montana: the Black Widow and the Aggressive House Spider (also called the Hobo spider). The Black Widow spins a web and can be identified by a red hourglass on its stomach. The Hobo spider spins a funnel-shaped web and may travel away from its nest. It is harder to identify than the Black Widow.

Children are often interested in bugs, including spiders. This interest may be encouraged, but it is important to be sure that the spiders children come into contact with are not poisonous. Pesticide application to kill spiders may not be effective or necessary. To learn more about spiders, including identification, specimen viewing, natural history, pictures, brochures, and control, contact the Montana State University Extension Office at (406) 447-8346, Room 207, City-County Building, 316 N. Park, Helena.

Mice

Mice can carry germs such as *Salmonella* and Hantavirus, both of which cause disease in humans. These germs are secreted in mouse urine and feces. Mice have no bladder control, so if you see droppings, urine is probably also present. Areas containing mouse droppings or nests should be cleaned and sanitized thoroughly. The use of gloves and a proper respiratory protective device is recommended for mouse-infested areas.

Hantavirus is transmitted when the virus gets aerosolized (put into the air) so don't sweep or vacuum mouse droppings; wet them down prior to cleaning, preferably with a 10% bleach solution or equivalent sanitizer, and then wipe them up with paper towels or rags that can be bagged and discarded.

The best way to deal with rodents is to keep them out. Protect your home or business against mice by:

- Plugging up all holes around ducts, vents, pipes, and foundations.
- Eliminating hiding places such as brush and woodpiles near your house.

For indoor control:

- Eliminate food sources by putting food and pet food in bins or other mouse-proof containers. Do not use any food that has evidence of gnawing, or droppings.
- Eliminate hiding places as much as possible.
- Use traps, including snap and live traps.
- If you use poison, place it in a location that cannot be reached by children or pets, and where it will not spill onto food items.

Mosquitoes

Mosquitoes can carry several diseases, including encephalitis (swelling of the brain) such as West Nile virus. To avoid bites, any of the following are helpful:

- Wear long sleeves and long pants or other protective clothing.
- Don't go out at dusk and dawn or at other times when lots of mosquitoes are out.
- If you choose to use insect repellent, those containing DEET and Picaridin are considered to be effective; be sure to use as directed.
 - For children, apply repellent first to your hands and put on child's exposed skin. Avoid placing repellent on the child's hands.
 - Do not use repellent on infants 2 months or younger. Put them in a carrier or stroller and cover with mosquito netting.
 - Do not apply to skin under clothing, on cuts, wounds or irritated skin.
 - After returning indoors, wash treated skin with soap and water.
- Eliminate sources of standing water near your home; change birdbaths, pet water, and livestock tanks at least every 7 days to discourage mosquito-breeding areas.

Flies

Flies can carry germs into your home, especially if there is a nearby source, such as manure or garbage. They transport germs on their hairy bodies, feet, and with their feeding habits. Food should be kept protected from flies. To control flies:

- Keep them out using physical barriers such as screened doors and windows.
- Flies lay eggs in moist, organic material such as uncovered garbage containers, compost heaps, animal manure, dog droppings, decomposing vegetation, and stacks of lawn clippings.
 - Eliminate fly-breeding areas around your home.
 - Remove household garbage from your home at least weekly.
- Use fly swatters, bait traps, sticky traps or strips, and bug zappers (use indoors only; outdoors they zap too many "good" bugs).

Information

For more information about:

- Pest, disease, or weed control: Contact the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department at (406) 447-8352, the Montana State University Extension Office at (406) 447-8346, or check out the websites <http://entomology.montana.edu/YardGarden/YardGarden.exe> or <http://pep.wsu.edu/pestsense>.
- Integrated pest management: See the websites <http://ipm.montana.edu> and www.epa.gov/pesticides/ipm.
- Pesticides: Contact the National Pesticides Information Center at <http://npic.orst.edu> or (800) 858-7378 or the Rocky Mountain Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit at www.rmrpehsu.org or (877) 800-5554.